

## Interacting with Students:

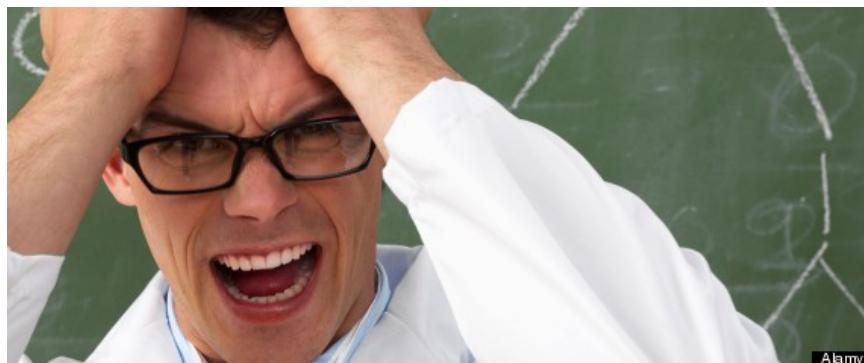
### *Happy medium:*

There is a balance that must be struck in the classroom when working with students. Yes, you want to be positive and helpful, but you cannot be so friendly that you become a “push-over” in the eyes of your students. And yes, you want to have structure for your students, but you cannot be too strict that you lose your students completely. Paul Pedota, author of the article “Strategies for Effective Classroom Management in the Secondary Setting,” writes,

Everyone concedes that there is a severe shortage of qualified teachers in the United States and that one of the most frequent reasons cited in the literature regarding the problem of staffing and retaining qualified individuals is the lack of student discipline. In speaking to new and veteran teachers who have left the profession primarily due to discipline problems in the classroom, many have commented that although they felt that during the preteaching training period sufficient time was spent on classroom management, they were not truly prepared for the realities of the classroom, which contributed to feelings of frustration, anger, and helplessness. (Pedota)

Discipline is easily managed with the right attitude and tools. Again, by practicing that balance between being a “push-over” and being very strict, students will react better to your teaching and their overall education. Those teachers who have found this balance found that with the right planning, they can react to any situation. The key to this balance is through creating a set of rules and policies for your classroom that are fair for both you and your students. Do not stray away from the rules/policies! They are there for a reason and will provide just enough structure for you to manage your classroom, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. In my interview with Steve Freeman, a history teacher at York High School, he stated, “Always establish the line between teacher and student. Be clear about your expectations and be consistent in delivering this message.

Within the classroom, there is an expected composure that all teachers must maintain in any subject. However, there will always be variables that test the mental and emotional health of teachers. And it is these emotions of stress, anger, frustration, etc., that will either make the day pleasant or awful; make you elated that you are a teacher or make you count down the minutes until the day is over. Not only is this affecting you as a teacher, your attitude will definitely influence your students as well. The best way to keep a pleasant demeanor for both you and your students is to practice the “[decide-first method](#).” Before class even begins, close the door to your classroom and sit down in a comfortable seat. Then close your eyes and take deep breaths. Lastly, reassure yourself that you will confront any situation that might happen that day with grace and with calm energy. By doing so, you will find yourself being more relaxed in these high-stress situations. The overall goal is to create a caring and supportive learning environment.



*Consistency between classes:*

Students work more efficiently in classrooms that are [consistent](#). The [University of Louisville](#) defines consistency as “routines and physical arrangements that are applied and implemented in the same way on a regular basis. This helps students predict what will happen next and increases the probability of their success” (“Structure and...”). By being consistent in classroom procedures and strategies, students will respond better to your teachings. School Improvement Network explains, “Clarity is fundamental to consistency. Being clear to your students is vital to establishing a consistent environment. This includes clarity of expectations; clarity of a lesson and clarity of procedures.” Some great strategies to be clear with your students include planning ahead of time, making an agenda for each class day, and creating a syllabus that your students can get familiar with in order to understand the class expectations. Do not worry when the lesson plan is not always followed, however. Your students may bring you down an insightful road you would have never expected. When the rules and class expectations change constantly, students will react poorly and soon lose motivation.



Within actually teaching the material, teachers must be consistent in their strategies. [Lecturing](#) students for long periods of time consistently is not the direction to take with students. Some of the pros of lecturing include the fact that lectures are straightforward, they appeal to auditory and verbal learners, and the teacher has a lot of control over the content. However, there are plenty of cons for lecturing as well. These include the fact that giving lectures every class can be boring and result in lack of motivation and interest from students, students who are not auditory and verbal learners may not respond as well to this type of teaching, and students may not feel comfortable in asking questions during lecture periods. Teachers need to be consistent by switching up their teaching strategies and methods every class in order to appeal to a variety of intelligences. Getting students involved by letting them get hands-on with the material and being able to ask questions for better understanding is the best way for students to get engaged. Freeman speaks of his preference of strategies, “My toolbox is ever-changing. Certain styles/techniques I gravitate to are: a) Socratic discussion, b) seminar discussion, c) direct instruction, peer teaching, etc. I find that styles that reflect cooperative teaching/learning skills are the most effective for me as they emphasize the significance of student participation in a classroom setting.”

## Applying Strategies:

### *Collaborative Teaching:*

There are going to be times in your teaching career where you will have to co-teach or do team teaching with co-workers. Co-teaching has many benefits. Having two teachers in one classroom allows the students to connect to different personalities and it creates a totally different feel of community within the classroom. Freeman reflects on his experience with co-teaching, "Co-teaching has always been effective for me. New and different perspectives are always helpful in a classroom." [Co-teaching](#) can be very hectic at times and teaching beliefs and strategies may not click at first, so there are some tips that can make a co-teaching pair very successful. Marisa Kaplan from Edutopia lists

1. Say this mantra: "All students are our students."
2. Come to planning meetings prepared (with an agenda) to maximize co-planning time.
3. If you feel something, say something! Open communication is the key to a successful partnership.
4. Realize that the success of your class depends on the strength of your co-teaching relationship.
5. Use a variety of co-teaching models to help maintain equality. (Kaplan)

### *Teacher Positioning in the Classroom:*

One of the more effective and easiest ways to make sure your students are on-task is by [positioning](#) yourself in different places throughout the class. This also helps when students have questions and allows you to have one-on-one time with students during work time as well. Let's say that you have an off-task student. An off-task student is a student who puts their energy into something that is not related to the activity in the classroom. This particular student is starting to distract the other students around him/her. How do you respond? Through relocating yourself to an area closer to that student or walking around the classroom, you send out a commanding disposition and the number of off-task students should decrease. This simple solution can be a better strategy than calling out verbal warnings and/or isolating the student.



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